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Get acquainted with the Iowa CREP

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INTEGRATED CROP MANAGEMENT

Get acquainted with the Iowa CREP

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), an offshoot of the original Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. Unique state and federal partnerships allow producers to receive incentive payments for installing specific conservation practices. Through CREP, farmers with eligible land receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource-conserving cover.

The primary goal of the Iowa CREP is to develop strategically located wetlands that are designed to remove nitrate from tile-drainage water. A secondary goal is to reduce sediment and nutrient loading in the Lake Panorama Watershed. Program partners include the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The Iowa CREP was initiated in 2001. The program will provide \$38 million in funding over the next 3 years to construct and restore up to 8,000 acres of wetlands and associated buffers. The Iowa CREP is targeted to continue for at least 10 years.

Goals of the Iowa CREP

- reduce nitrogen loading in streams by 300 to 600 tons per year
- reduce sediment entering surface waters in the Lake Panorama Watershed
- reduce or maintain soil erosion rates at or below 2-5 tons per acre on buffered areas
- demonstrate a variety of available wetland technologies and their value for improving water quality
- enhance wildlife habit
- increase recreational opportunities

Practices eligible under this component of the Iowa CREP are wetland restoration (CP-23) and erosion control structures (CP-7), when needed as part of the wetland establishment. Federal financial incentives include

1. 15 annual rental payments of 150 percent of the weighted average soil rental rate;
2. a \$5.00 per acre per year maintenance payment for 15 years;
3. 50 percent cost-share for eligible costs of establishing conservation practices; and
4. a one-time Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) (40 percent of the total eligible costs of practice installation).

State of Iowa funds provide an additional 10 percent of the eligible establishment costs. In addition, to maintain the buffers and wetlands, landowners are required to choose one of two easement options, with the one-time, up-front incentives paid by the state. Easement

payments are \$650 per acre for a perpetual easement, or \$325 per acre for a 30-year easement.

Research at Iowa State University has confirmed that strategically located and designed wetlands under the program requirements will remove 40-90 percent of nitrates and more than 90 percent of herbicides in tile drainage water.

The Iowa CREP is available in 37 counties in the tile-drained region of North Central Iowa. These watersheds are noted for some of the highest nitrate loads in the Mississippi River Basin. Over the next decade, the Iowa CREP could develop wetlands within the program area with the capacity for removing more than 5,000 tons of nitrate-nitrogen. In addition to reducing nitrate loads to surface waters, the wetlands will provide wildlife habitat and increased recreational opportunities for Iowans.

Iowa State University has developed advanced computer techniques that use geographical information systems to assist in siting CREP wetlands. The advanced techniques ensure that program requirements are met without interfering with drainage and cropping rights on nearby properties. More than 100 wetland sites have been identified to date through these techniques, and landowner contacts as well as wetland designs are underway through the Soil and Water Conservation District field offices.

The secondary goal of the Iowa CREP, to reduce sediment and nutrient loading, is being implemented in Lake Panorama, a 1,400-acre reservoir on the Middle Raccoon River in Guthrie County. The [Lake Panorama Association](#) [1] is providing resources to enhance incentives for the establishment of 1,000 acres of buffers in the Lake Panorama Watershed over the next 3 years. Additional partners are the IDALS, USDA FSA, and the NRCS.

Practices eligible under this component of the Iowa CREP are filter strips (CP-21) and riparian forest buffers (CP-22). Federal financial incentives include

1. a one-time Signing Incentive Payment of \$150 for a full 15-year contract for each eligible acre;
2. annual rental payments of 140 percent of the weighted average soil rental rate for 15 years;
3. a \$5 per acre per year maintenance payment for 15 years;
4. 50 percent cost-share for eligible establishment; and
5. a one-time PIP of 40 percent of the total eligible cost of practice installation.

Lake Panorama Association funds are used to provide the additional 10 percent of the eligible cost of establishing the conservation practices. In addition, to maintain the buffers, landowners are required to choose one of two easement options, with the one-time, up-front incentives paid by the Lake Panorama Association.

With the long-term restoration of wetlands and water quality benefits, Iowa's CREP is an excellent example of how a farm program can benefit more than just the farmer. Contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District or FSA office at your local USDA service center, or IDALS to learn more. Also, check out [FSA online](#) [2] and the [Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship](#) [3].

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Links:

[1] <http://www.lakepanorama.org/>

[2] <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>

[3] <http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/>

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